



Complete Summary

TITLE

Mental health: the percentage of patients on lithium therapy with a record of lithium levels in the therapeutic range within the previous 6 months.

SOURCE(S)

British Medical Association (BMA). Quality and outcomes framework guidance. London (UK): British Medical Association (BMA); 2006. 132 p.

Measure Domain

PRIMARY MEASURE DOMAIN

Outcome

The validity of measures depends on how they are built. By examining the key building blocks of a measure, you can assess its validity for your purpose. For more information, visit the [Measure Validity](#) page.

SECONDARY MEASURE DOMAIN

Does not apply to this measure

Brief Abstract

DESCRIPTION

This measure is used to assess the percentage of patients on lithium therapy with a record of lithium levels in the therapeutic range within the previous 6 months.

RATIONALE

There are relatively few indicators of the quality of mental health care in relation to the importance of these conditions. This reflects the complexity of mental health problems, and the complex mix of physical, psychological and social issues that present to general practitioners. The indicators included in the Quality and Outcomes Framework (QOF) can therefore only be regarded as providing a partial view on the quality of mental health care.

For many patients with mental health problems, the most important indicators relate to the inter-personal skills of the doctor, the time given in consultations and the opportunity to discuss a range of management options. Within the 'patient

experience' section of the quality framework (see the original measure documentation), there exists the opportunity to focus patient surveys on particular groups of patients. This would be one way in which a practice could look in more detail at the quality of care experienced by people with mental health problems.

Mental health problems are also included in some of the organisational indicators (see the original measure documentation). These include the need for a system to identify and follow up patients who do not attend where the practice has taken on a responsibility for administering regular neuroleptic injections, significant event audits which focus specifically on mental health problems, and methods of addressing the needs of carers.

This measure is one of six [Mental Health](#) measures. The Mental Health indicator set focuses on patients with serious mental illness. There are also indicator sets that focus on people with depression and dementia (see the original measure documentation for details).

Lithium monitoring is essential due to the narrow therapeutic range of serum lithium and the potential toxicity from intercurrent illness, declining renal function or co-prescription of drugs, e.g., thiazide diuretics or NSAIDs which may reduce lithium excretion. However, there is no definitive evidence on the frequency of lithium level checks. Most practitioners would monitor lithium levels when stable every three to six months. Where a practice is prescribing, it has responsibility for checking that routine blood tests have been done (not necessarily by the practice) and for following up patients who default where responsibility has been accepted for administering treatment.

The therapeutic range for patients on lithium therapy is normally 0.4 - 1.0 mmol/l (see the British National Formulary). If the range differs locally, the Primary Care organisation (PCO) will be required to allow for this.

PRIMARY CLINICAL COMPONENT

Mental health; lithium therapy; therapeutic drug monitoring

DENOMINATOR DESCRIPTION

Patients who are on lithium therapy

NUMERATOR DESCRIPTION

Number of patients from the denominator with a record of lithium levels in the therapeutic range within the previous six months

Evidence Supporting the Measure

EVIDENCE SUPPORTING THE CRITERION OF QUALITY

- A clinical practice guideline or other peer-reviewed synthesis of the clinical evidence
- A formal consensus procedure involving experts in relevant clinical, methodological, and organizational sciences

Evidence Supporting Need for the Measure

NEED FOR THE MEASURE

Unspecified

State of Use of the Measure

STATE OF USE

Current routine use

CURRENT USE

Internal quality improvement
National reporting
Pay-for-performance

Application of Measure in its Current Use

CARE SETTING

Physician Group Practices/Clinics

PROFESSIONALS RESPONSIBLE FOR HEALTH CARE

Physicians

LOWEST LEVEL OF HEALTH CARE DELIVERY ADDRESSED

Group Clinical Practices

TARGET POPULATION AGE

Unspecified

TARGET POPULATION GENDER

Either male or female

STRATIFICATION BY VULNERABLE POPULATIONS

Unspecified

Characteristics of the Primary Clinical Component

INCIDENCE/PREVALENCE

Unspecified

ASSOCIATION WITH VULNERABLE POPULATIONS

Unspecified

BURDEN OF ILLNESS

Unspecified

UTILIZATION

Unspecified

COSTS

Unspecified

Institute of Medicine National Healthcare Quality Report Categories

IOM CARE NEED

Living with Illness

IOM DOMAIN

Effectiveness

Safety

Data Collection for the Measure

CASE FINDING

Users of care only

DESCRIPTION OF CASE FINDING

Patients who are on lithium therapy*

*Note: The Quality and Outcomes Framework (QOF) includes the concept of exception reporting. This has been introduced to allow practices to pursue the quality improvement agenda and not be penalised, where, for example, patients do not attend for review, or where a medication cannot be prescribed due to a contraindication or side-effect.

The following criteria have been agreed for exception reporting:

- A. patients who have been recorded as refusing to attend review who have been invited on at least three occasions during the preceding twelve months
- B. patients for whom it is not appropriate to review the chronic disease parameters due to particular circumstances, e.g., terminal illness, extreme frailty
- C. patients newly diagnosed within the practice or who have recently registered with the practice, who should have measurements made within three months and delivery of clinical standards within nine months, e.g., blood pressure or cholesterol measurements within target levels
- D. patients who are on maximum tolerated doses of medication whose levels remain suboptimal
- E. patients for whom prescribing a medication is not clinically appropriate, e.g., those who have an allergy, another contraindication or have experienced an adverse reaction
- F. where a patient has not tolerated medication
- G. where a patient does not agree to investigation or treatment (informed dissent), and this has been recorded in their medical records
- H. where the patient has a supervening condition which makes treatment of their condition inappropriate, e.g., cholesterol reduction where the patient has liver disease
- I. where an investigative service or secondary care service is unavailable.

Refer to the original measure documentation for further details.

DENOMINATOR SAMPLING FRAME

Patients associated with provider

DENOMINATOR INCLUSIONS/EXCLUSIONS

Inclusions

Patients who are on lithium therapy

Exclusions

See "Description of Case Finding" field for exception reporting.

RELATIONSHIP OF DENOMINATOR TO NUMERATOR

All cases in the denominator are equally eligible to appear in the numerator

DENOMINATOR (INDEX) EVENT

Clinical Condition

Therapeutic Intervention

DENOMINATOR TIME WINDOW

Time window is a single point in time

NUMERATOR INCLUSIONS/EXCLUSIONS

Inclusions

Number of patients from the denominator with a record of lithium levels in the therapeutic range within the previous six months

Exclusions

Unspecified

MEASURE RESULTS UNDER CONTROL OF HEALTH CARE PROFESSIONALS, ORGANIZATIONS AND/OR POLICYMAKERS

The measure results are somewhat or substantially under the control of the health care professionals, organizations and/or policymakers to whom the measure applies.

NUMERATOR TIME WINDOW

Fixed time period

DATA SOURCE

Laboratory data
Medical record
Registry data

LEVEL OF DETERMINATION OF QUALITY

Individual Case

OUTCOME TYPE

Clinical Outcome

PRE-EXISTING INSTRUMENT USED

Unspecified

Computation of the Measure

SCORING

Rate

INTERPRETATION OF SCORE

Better quality is associated with a higher score

ALLOWANCE FOR PATIENT FACTORS

Unspecified

STANDARD OF COMPARISON

External comparison at a point in time
Internal time comparison
Prescriptive standard

PRESCRIPTIVE STANDARD

Payment stages: 40-90%

EVIDENCE FOR PRESCRIPTIVE STANDARD

British Medical Association (BMA). Quality and outcomes framework guidance. London (UK): British Medical Association (BMA); 2006. 132 p.

Evaluation of Measure Properties

EXTENT OF MEASURE TESTING

Unspecified

Identifying Information

ORIGINAL TITLE

MH 5. The percentage of patients on lithium therapy with a record of lithium levels in the therapeutic range within the previous 6 months.

MEASURE COLLECTION

[Quality and Outcomes Framework Indicators](#)

MEASURE SET NAME

[Mental Health \(MH\)](#)

DEVELOPER

British Medical Association
National Health System (NHS) Confederation

ENDORSER

National Health Service (NHS)

ADAPTATION

Measure was not adapted from another source.

RELEASE DATE

2004 Apr

REVISION DATE

2006 Feb

MEASURE STATUS

This is the current release of the measure.

SOURCE(S)

British Medical Association (BMA). Quality and outcomes framework guidance. London (UK): British Medical Association (BMA); 2006. 132 p.

MEASURE AVAILABILITY

The individual measure, "MH 5. The percentage of patients on lithium therapy with a record of lithium levels in the therapeutic range within the previous 6 months," is published in the "Quality and outcomes framework guidance." This document is available in Portable Document Format (PDF) from the [British Medical Association Web site](#).

NQMC STATUS

This NQMC summary was completed by ECRI on May 22, 2006. The information was verified by the measure developer on August 11, 2006.

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The logo for FIRST GOV, with "FIRST" in blue and "GOV" in red, and a small red star above the "I".

